Los Angeles Reporter Farr Gets New Jail Sentence for Contempt

7-30-74

Special to The Washington Post

LOS ANGELES, July 29 — Saying that "no man has the right to hold himself above the law," a Superior Court judge today sentenced Los Angeles Times reporter William T. Farr to five days in fail and fined him $500 as punishment for contempt of the judge's order to reveal his sources.

"This is the maximum sentence the court can give," Superior Court Judge Charles H. Older told Farr. Older said he would have made the sentence more severe "if the court had the power."

Farr, 39, has already spent 46 days in confinement for his refusal to tell Older who gave him the transcript of testimony about to be given by a witness in the 1970 Charles Manson murder trial. Farr, at the time a reporter for the Los Angeles Examiner, wrote a story based on the transcripts using extensive verbatim quotes.

Older today called the story "lurid and sensational," and said its publication interfered with the defendants' right to a fair trial.

The issue was dropped until after the conviction of Manson and his followers in the Sharon Tate killings. Then Older demanded to know who had violated his gag order by releasing the transcript used by Farr. Farr refused to reveal his sources. Finally, on the advice of his lawyer, Farr said that two of the six attorneys involved in the case had given him the material. Farr refused to identify the lawyers by name.

After he had refused once more to tell Older which lawyers provided him with the testimony, the judge ordered Farr to county jail for an indefinite sentence. Farr spent 46 days in jail until Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas freed him.

Outside the courtroom, Farr told reporters he would appeal today's ruling.